

HOW HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CAN SUPPORT LGBT PEOPLE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

An estimated 2.9 to 3.8 million lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people live in rural communities across the United States, and they are part of the fabric of rural American life. LGBT people in rural communities often choose to live there for many of the same reasons that other people do: for the strength of community and connection to family, for the pace of life, or simply to be part of the place where they were raised and call home.



However, the structural challenges facing all rural residents, such as fewer doctors or employers, can add to the challenges facing LGBT people in rural and urban areas alike, such as discrimination or mistreatment. By addressing the overall needs and challenges of rural areas, while also directly addressing LGBT-specific experiences in rural areas, meaningful and long-lasting change is possible in rural America, for both LGBT and non-LGBT residents.

ACTIONS HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT LGBT PEOPLE LIVING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

- **Update health forms to include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity**, to be inclusive of diverse families (i.e. “Parent/Guardian” rather than “Mother/Father”), and to allow patients to indicate their names and pronouns (independent of what may be listed on their insurance or identification cards). Ensure the confidentiality of such information, and communicate these safeguards to patients.
- **Participate in LGBT cultural competency trainings** professional development and community service opportunities, either in person or via webinars, to learn more about the health needs of LGBT people, how best to provide inclusive care, and how to advocate for patients. Seek out trainings that are explicitly intersectional and recognize the unique experiences of, for example, LGBT people of color.
- **Signal commitment to inclusion** by updating marketing materials with diverse images of patients and by displaying [inclusive posters](#) and stickers in visible parts of the office or workplace.
- **Host information sessions in rural areas about LGBT health needs** in partnership with local and state community organizations.
- **Prepare and/or share resource lists for LGBT people** to learn more about available resources. These lists can include links to national or local family groups, online discussion boards, or organizations and other resource lists such as RadRemedy and the Campaign for Southern Equality’s “Trans in the South: A Guide to Resources and Services,” which offer transgender-inclusive provider listings. Promote LGBT-inclusive resources in your local community, including by hanging [this flyer](#).
- **Evaluate programs and services**, including opioid and addiction recovery efforts, and update wherever needed to make sure these offerings are LGBT-inclusive and affirming. Make related resources, such as pamphlets, fliers, and websites, explicitly clear that these programs are LGBT-inclusive and affirming.
- **Advocate for the inclusion of questions about sexual orientation and gender identity** in community health surveys and with county and state departments of public health.
- **Advocate for and participate in community needs assessment efforts**, and work to ensure these efforts are LGBT-inclusive.

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ACTIONS HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT ALL PEOPLE, INCLUDING LGBT PEOPLE, LIVING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

- **Learn about the insurance laws in your state and the federal requirements under the Affordable Care Act**, to help patients navigate complicated systems to obtain medically-necessary care.
- **Support and participate in broad-based community resources** that can directly improve residents' lives. For example, additional funding or volunteers for an existing mobile health clinic would expand healthcare access for all rural residents in the area, including LGBT residents. This approach would also protect LGBT residents against being potentially outed if they were to be seen visiting, for example, an LGBT-specific health clinic.
- **Explicitly include HIV prevention, testing, and treatment in all plans and programs**, and fund these efforts in rural communities.
- **Advocate for increased funding for community health clinics.**
- **Invest in and expand opportunities for telehealth** to allow patients to obtain care without traveling.
- **Consider options to address rural transportation challenges** by contracting with bus services or ridesharing services.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES OF LGBT PEOPLE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE NEW REPORT

WHERE WE CALL HOME: LGBT PEOPLE IN RURAL AMERICA

www.lgbtmap.org/rural-lgbt

View your state's LGBT policy profile at
www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps

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